

# Pink Lady

Lot #1314  
Saturday,  
January 19, 2008



The "Pink Lady" is a one-off car special ordered by famed 'da Vinci of Detroit' designer **Harley Earl** for his wife. Features a Pontiac Catalina chassis with Bonneville trim, 389 cid Tri-Power with 348 hp and every accessory. Restored and AACA Grand National champion twice.

In 1958, at the height of his career, the world's greatest artist/engineer impresario, **Harley J. Earl**, ran General Motor's famed Styling division. Earl often created special order cars for celebrities, GM executives and their wives, politicians, and others. Except for Harley Earl, no one else inside any other division of General Motors had the clout to spend large amounts of corporate money building expensive one-of-a-kind custom cars for important dignitaries!

The **Pink Lady** is a one-off, **special ordered** (#90642) Pontiac Catalina chassis with Bonneville trim, 389 c.i. Tri-Power producing 348 hp and equipped with nearly every accessory available in 1959.

Accessories include **automatic transmission, full factory air conditioning, power steering, power brakes, power windows, air suspension** (*pump and lines only as this system didn't work in 1959 and was recalled by Pontiac but not removed from the Pink Lady. When restored, the bellows were replaced by stock springs, the rare pump remains*), **power retractable convertible top, front bucket seats, sportable AM radio** (*including small removable battery powered radio*), **power antenna, and removable trunk light.**

This motoramic masterpiece had special touches including the shortened Catalina chassis with Bonneville rear trim, Bonneville dashboard, custom interior and exterior chrome trim and custom pink finish with maroon carpeting. Its meticulous body-off restoration has twice garnered an AACA Grand National champion and a Pontiac Owner's Club Senior Award. Driven under 100 miles since restoration.

This is a chance to own a car with a direct link to the automotive genius, **Harley Earl**. This is the first time it has been for sale and comes with full documentation including written recollections from Semon "Bunkie" Knudsen, Former head of Pontiac; E. A. Bachle of GM Design, and John M. Sawruk, P.E., the Official Pontiac Historian, that attest to its authenticity. ■



*Banett Jackson*

THE WORLD'S GREATEST COLLECTOR CAR EVENTS™

# Harley Earl

## The Da Vinci of Detroit



An early proponent of empowering women, Earl and his 'Damsels of Design' in 1959. All were highly trained industrial designers.

An artist and purveyor to millions of people, Harley J. Earl created works of art that survive as symbols of a vanished age, a time of America's automotive opulence but also of craftsmanship, integrity and beauty.

Earl came to General Motors in 1927 and retired in 1958. During that time, he turned the business of designing, mass-producing and marketing automobiles on its head. With few exceptions, no other person has single-handedly contributed more to the evolution of the modern automobile industry.

The reason GM's cars stood out so much during the mid-twentieth century had to do with the main character of Harley Earl's story: **STYLE**.

Styling leadership changed GM's most important design and engineering products, its cars. After which, this unique American corporation changed FAST. It didn't happen easily, but by the end of the 1930s Earl had conquered design control for all GM brands.

Five of Earl's greatest milestones included:

- Founder of the Automobile Design Profession in America.
- Introduced math-based clay modeling principles.
- Inventor of the concept car – a.k.a. the "Dream Car".
- Introduced the Annual Styling Model Change.
- The GM Motorama Show, precursor to today's auto show.

**"Beauty in cars depends on design rather than dollars."**

Harley J. Earl

When you examine what is at the heart of Harley Earl's quote, his reasoning of "art with intent" via design was a more democratic form of individual expression truly at the core of what would successfully sell GM's modern automobiles in the future.

Earl's success was reflected across the auto industry. At the time of his death in 1969, Earl protégés headed the design departments of all four Detroit carmakers.

To learn more on the life and career of Harley J. Earl, visit [www.carofthecentury.com](http://www.carofthecentury.com) ■

1951 Le Sabre Dream Car



1963 Corvette Stingray



1959 Cadillac



1954 Pontiac Bonneville Special



1958 Chevrolet Impala



An ultra modern design studio at GM in the 1950s.



# Harley Earl's



## Pink Lady

### 1959 Special Order Pontiac Catalina Convertible

The provenance of this decidedly unique Catalina has been clearly established. Its Special Order number (90642 6-2-59), remembrances of GM Executives and those of the Earl family clearly place this vehicle at the forefront of cars used by Harley Earl and his family.

Constance Earl was married to Harley Earl's son, Jim Earl, in 1950. From a recent interview with Connie and her nephew Richard Earl:

*"I remember Sue's first custom pink car because I used to drive Sue and her friends to the horse track in Hazel Park... We always arrived there in style because of this custom made Pontiac Harley designed. Sue and her other lady friends loved to gamble and that's why they frequently went to the horse track. Often enough, I went along and would drive them. The horse track was where a lot of the factory workers went too, so when we'd pull up in this outrageously colorful Catalina, most people were wowed by its rare beauty. Remember, in 1959, this was probably the only pink Pontiac convertible in the U.S.A. It was a real stand out, for there was nothing else like it!"*



Harley Earl (rt) and Connie speak with racing legend Briggs Cunningham at Elkhart Lake in 1957.

*on these really funny looking decorative rhinestone ice bags over their heads while I was driving them out to the track from Grosse Pointe. It was great, we had the top down, radio on and AC blasting away cause it was so hot. So when we pulled up, most people got to witness seeing the pink car*

Connie went onto say:

*"On one steamy summer day, Sue and one of her good friends (I can't remember her name) put*



*It started with Sue Earl's 1959 "Pink Lady" Pontiac and by the mid-60s she'd have some other very distinct custom Corvettes, such as this 1963, designed for her by Harley Earl.*

*with the two women in the back seat wearing these shiny bags on their heads! Along with the car, their headdresses even drew more attention than usual. This thought has always remained with me over the years, and whenever I think of it still makes me laugh. I also haven't forgotten that Harley seemed to be bothered a little by the fact his wife, Sue, always liked driving this pink car with the top down and the AC blowing full blast."*

Former GM Executive (and Pontiac head) Semon 'Bunkie' Knudsen remarked, "...information available indicates that the car was a Styling Studio experimental car that was used by Mrs. Harley Earl, the wife of the well known head of Styling for General Motors for many years."

Details of when it escaped Pontiac Division control were lost after the State of Michigan purged motor vehicle records. It is assumed that the car was rendered inoperable when the air suspension system failed after 42,551 miles. It was stored for approximately 10 years before Dr. Frank Ellis did its first restoration in the early 1980's. The Pink Lady was shown in 10 major meets, a half dozen tours and innumerable club or neighborhood events until January 2000 when it was nearly destroyed in an engine fire.

Ellis turned to Barry Bales II of Scottsdale, AZ to accomplish the second rebirth. The engine was overhauled; the vehicle was stripped down and rebuilt. Forty-two months of work were rewarded with its second AACA Grand National First Prize.

Barrett-Jackson, Scottsdale 2008, is the first time the Pink Lady has been offered for sale. ■